

Testimony before the Public Health Committee
Public Hearing on Monday, March 1, 2010

**Subject: H.B. 5286—An Act Concerning Licensure of Master and
Clinical Social Workers**

Good morning members of the Public Health Committee, Gayle Slossberg who represents my home district, and all those who have come this morning who have an interest in House Bill 5286. This bill concerns the licensure of master and clinical social workers. Thanks you for this opportunity to share my views on this very important aspect of social work.

I am a representative of the Connecticut Chapter of National Association of Social Workers. My name is Guay Chatfield, and I have been working as a social worker for over 30 years and a member of NASW for 26 years.

My social work career has been with forensic clinical social work. I began this career (post masters) with two and a half years at the Department of Correction and then 17 years with the forensic division of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

I would like to give you two examples of personal experiences that made me convinced that it is important to license Master and Clinical Social Workers after their MSW graduation.

The first example occurred while I was director of the Bridgeport Office of Court Evaluations. I supervised a second-year social work master's level intern. This student had been working in the social work field for about ten years before completing her master's degree. She became a valuable asset to our office. She was nominated and awarded the Social Work Student of the Year while she was interning in our office.

According to the Connecticut General Statute 54-56d, Competence to Stand Trial, requires that this type of evaluation may be completed by a physician specializing in psychiatry alone or as a member of a team consisting of a medical physician specializing in psychiatry, a licensed clinical psychologist and a master's level nurse or a licensed clinical social workers. Every office of the Connecticut Offices of Court evaluations has a licensed clinical worker for their teams.

However, when this student graduated with high honors, our office was unable to offer her a social work position because she did not possess a Connecticut social work license. We had to release her to find a job that did not require a licensed social worker.

The second example which almost upsets more than the first example occurred in this same office. I hired a young woman as a Secretary II who was working in another state department. This young woman had 13 college credits from Housatonic Community College. Three days before she was to begin working in our office, she telephoned me. She told me that she could not take the job in our office because her supervisor told her that she would promote this young woman to a social work classification. Yes, at that point without further education.

Currently, the title social worker is not a protected title such as "psychologist," and "physician". A protected title has specific educational, testing, and/or work experience within that category. The licensure of master and clinical social work graduates would help to prevent this common misunderstanding among the general population as to what "social worker" means. At this point an agency may title anyone with any education as a social worker. By licensing professional social workers, the community as a whole would benefit from knowing that a case is being handled by a social worker who has graduated from an accredited master of social work program and passed the nationally recognized social work exam before being awarded a Connecticut license. This license tells the public that this is a highly qualified skilled clinician.

I am not sure if you are aware that a MSW degree is a 60 or 60+ credit program. There are some exceptions if the MSW student has a BSW, some of these repetitive courses may be waived. Most non-social work master's degrees require 30 credits. This means that anyone applying to be a Master Licensed Social Worker has completed 120 credits for a bachelor's degree making a total of at least 180 college credits. Each MSW student must complete an internship for a full semester or however arranged between the school and the agency.

Social work is one of the fastest growing career fields in our country. Because of the current economy, let us not continue to deny fully qualified MSW graduates the opportunity to become licensed by the State of Connecticut. Also, by licensing more qualified social workers, it may eliminate some of the misuse and misunderstanding of the term, social worker.

As I conclude this testimony, I thank you for listening to me and I urge you, the Public Health Committee, to vote for H.B. 5286, which will enhance the quality of treatment for the community in general and those consumers requiring social work services.

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